

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 00713 271755Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O R 271625Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7160

INFO AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 713

EXDIS

FRANKFURT FOR CO COMPANY "A"

DEPT PASS SECDEF, USCINCEUR, CINCUSNAVEUR AS INFO ROUTINE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, AFSSO, MILI, OGEN

SUBJECT: SANCHEZ CASE: FURTHER VIEWS OF GREEK GOVERNMENT

REF: ATHENS 631

1. IN THE COURSE OF A MEEGING I HAD WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS OVER THE WEEKEND, WHICH WAS PROMARILY DEVOTED TO OTHER SUBJECTS, I FOUND OCCASION TO DISCUSS WITH HIM OUR PROPOSED HANDLING OF THE SANCHEZ CASE (REFTEL AND TO PROBE FURTHER INTO HIS AND THE GREEK GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE. BITSIOS SHOWED COMPLETE FAMILIARITY WITH THE CASE AND I GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT FURTHER DISCUSSION OF IT HAD OCCURRED WITHIN GOG SINCE DCM STEARNS HAD DISCUSSED IT WITH TZOUNIS JANUARY 21.

2. BITSIOS SAID THAT WHILE IN EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES THE GREEK GOVERNMENT BELEIVED THAT A TRIAL OF SANCHEZ BY A GREEK COURT WOULD BEST CALCULATED TO LIMIT DAMAGE TO OVERALL GREEK-U.S. RELATIONS, HE THOUGHT THAT A SECOND BEST BUT ALSO ACCEPTABLE COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO CONDUCT A U.S. COURT MARTIAL IN GREECE IF, SINCE SANCHEZ WAS A U.S. MARINE, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HOLD THE COURT MARTIAL ON ONE OF OUR HOMEPORTED ESTROYERS AT ELEFSIS-NOT RPT NOT AT THE EMBASSY--WITH A GREEK MAGISTRATE

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PRESENT AS A "SILENT OBSERVER." PRESENCE OF LATTER, HE

BELEVED, WOULD AVOID IMPRESSION THAT USG WAS INSENSITIVE TO GREEK PUBLIC OPINION OR THAT COURT MARTIAL PROCEEDINGS WERE LESS THAN FAIR AND IMPARTIAL.

3. WITHOUT INDICATING WHAT OUR FINAL DECISION ON SANCHEZ WOULD BE, I THANKED BITSIOS FOR HIS COMMENTS AND ADVICE AND TOLD HIM THT WE WOULD KEEP MFA INFORMED OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN SANCHEZ CASE.

4. COMMENT: BITSIOS' AMPLIFICATION OF GOG ATTITUDE IS ENCOURAGING. IT SUGGESTS THAT HE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF AND PROBABLY ALSO WITH JUSTICE MINISTER STEPHANAKIS. HIS COMMENTS REENFORCE MY JUDGMENT THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED WITH U.S. COURT MARTIAL. IN ADDITION I BELIEVE WE SHOULD TAKE VERY SERIOUSLY BITSIOS, ADVICE THAT COURT MARTIAL BE CONDUCTED ON HOMEPORTED SHIP IN THE PRESENCE OF A GREEK MAGISTRATE. IN VIEW OF THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF IMPORTANT AMERICAN INTERESTS WHICH COULD BE AFFECTED BY SANCHEZ CASE, IT BEHOOVES US TO ACCOMMODATE OFFICIAL GREEK VIEWS AS LONG AS THEY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE RIGHTS OF SANCHEZ AS AN INDIVIDUAL, HIS PROSPECTS FOR A FAIR TRAIL AND OUR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S SUGGESTION THAT THE COURT MARITAL BE HELD ON A U.S. SHIP IN GREEK WASTERS IN THE PRESENCE OF A GREEK MAGISTRATE SEEMS TO ME TO MEET THESE CRITERIA.

5. I REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT TO CONTACT DOD ON AN URGENT BASIS AND AT AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL TO ASSURE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO FOLLOW THE COURSE OF ACTION SUGGESTED BY BITSIOS. IN THIS CONNECTION, U.S. MILITARY AUTHORITIES ARE CURRENTLY MOVING AHEAD WITH PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATIONS AND THE TIME IF RAPIDLY APPROACHING WHEN OUR DECISION TO COURT MARTIALSANCHEZ WILL BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN ATHENS. THIS COULD OCCUR IN NEXT FEW DAYS WHEN GREEK WITNESSES ARE INTERROGATED. I THEREFORE WISH TO BE IN A POSITION TO STATE IN RESPONSE TO PRESS QUERIES THAT COURT MARTIAL WILL OCCUR ON HOMEPORTED DESTROYER IN PRESENCE--AT OUR REQUEST--OF GREEK MAGISTRATE. I SHOULD RECEIVE AUTHORIZATION TO DO THIS NOT LATER THAN THE OPENING OF BUSINESS JANUA
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NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS00713
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750029-0876
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750119/aaaaaqmp.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 ATHENS 631
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAY 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <02 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SANCHEZ CASE: FURTHER VIEWS OF GREEK GOVERNMENT
TAGS: ASEC, OGEN, (SANCHEZ)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006